

PAPERS READ

BEFORE THE

LANCASTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1910.

"History herself, as seen in her own workshop."

MICHAEL WITMAN, LOYALIST

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER MEETING.

VOL. XIV. NO. 7.

PRICE TWENTY-FIVE CENTS PER COPY.

LANCASTER, PA.
1910.

PAPERS READ

BEFORE THE

LANCASTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1910.

"History herself, as seen in her own workshop."

MICHAEL WITMAN, LOYALIST

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER MEETING.

VOL. XIV. NO. 7.

PRICE TWENTY-FIVE CENTS PER COPY.

LANCASTER, PA.
1910.

Michael Witman, Loyalist	-	-	-	-	-	-	181
Minutes of the September Meeting	-	-	-	-	-	-	187

MICHAEL WITMAN, LOYALIST

In Volume XII., No. 7, of our Society's proceedings appeared sketches of the Lancaster county Loyalists. Among them was Michael Witman, of Cocalico township. This man Witman was perhaps the wealthiest, if not the most prominent, of all those attainted of treason in this locality. The article alluded to gives in detail the list of his possessions, real and personal, seized by the Provincial Government, sold, and the proceeds turned over to the new State Government by the acting agent and received.

The records at Harrisburg, as well as the Colonial records, were carefully searched at the time, but nothing further than was stated in the above-named article was learned of this man Witman or his career. Since then several items concerning him have been brought to light through the researches of Mrs. Mary N. Robinson, and these are now printed to supplement that early account. An effort was made to learn something of his early life, but only a few facts were ascertained, which are now stated.

The name of Michael Witman does not appear in Volume XVII, second series, Pennsylvania Archives, as among the arrivais from Germany. But on September 29, 1733, the passengers that reached Philadelphia on the Pink Mary were qualified. Among them were Mathies (aged

fifty-six), Mara Catrana (thirty-eight), Johannes (fifteen), Elizabeth (three and three-fourths), Matthew (thirty-four), Margrett (thirty), Mathies (six), and Christopher Witman, aged eight. The group was no doubt composed of two related families.

The only one connected with this inquiry was Christopher, aged eight years, and it is more than likely he was the father of our friend Michael, the Tory. On February 18, 1765, Christopher Witman, of Manheim township, made and signed a will, which was proved September 12, 1770. In that will his wife, Barbara, is named, and the following sons and daughters: Adam, Christopher, John, Michael, Henry; Rosina, wife of Detrich Kremer; Madlena, wife of Ludwig Imler, and Regina, wife of William Kurtz. The witnesses to the will were George Strickler, Casper Shaffner, Jr., Elizabeth Shaffner. (See will of Christopher Witman, C. 1. 307.)

Next we have the following marriage, celebrated by Rev. John Waldschmidt: Michael Witman to Catharine, daughter of Engelbert Schneider, January 9, 1759. (Volume 6, Sixth series, Pennsylvania Archives, p. 261.)

Next we have a sale of ninety-five acres of land in Cocalico township by Michael Witman and his wife, Catharine, on April 28, 1770, to Samuel Bowman, for £373. Recorded August 6, 1785.

On the same day the same parties sold a lot of land in Cocalico township to Henry Mohler for £373. Recorded April 28, 1790.

The foregoing records relate all that has been discovered relating to Witman's career prior to the time when his tory proclivities brought

him into contact with the State of Pennsylvania in 1779, the story of which is told in the article already referred to. As is there stated, he was at that time possessed of 232 acres of good land and a desirable tavern stand in Cocalico township, and which was seized by order of the Provincial Council on September 4, 1779, for £25,000.

With the above transaction Witman's was a sealed book until several months ago, when Mrs. Robinson discovered the following very interesting document, detailing the action of the Supreme Executive Council of the State among the archives in the Court House, of which the following is a verbatim copy:

Pennsylvania SS (L. S.).

Book R., P. 527.

Jos. Reed.

The Supreme Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. To all to whom these presents shall come. Greeting:

Whereas, Michael Witman late of the County of Lancaster Innholder hath been convicted and attainted of High Treason and is now confined in the gaol of the said County and hath Petitioned this Council praying us to "take his case and that of his unhappy family into our Compassionate consideration and to extend mercy and Pardon unto him." Wherefore Know Ye that we having duly considered his case have pardoned remitted and released and by these Presents for us and our successors do Pardon remit and release unto the said Michael Witman by whatsoever name or addition of names or place the said Michael Witman may be known or called or was lately known or called a'il and all manner of Treasons misprison of Treason malfeasances crimes and offenses

whatsoever by himself or with any other Person or Persons against the said Commonwealth before the day of the date hereof at what time soever in what manner soever and wheresoever committed or perpetrated whereof the said Michael Witman is or hath been indicted accused arraigned impeached attainted convicted condemned or adjudged and all and singular the indictments condemnations attainders and executions so far only as the same relates to pains of death and corporal Punishments whatsoever upon or against the said Michael Witman for or concerning the Premises or any or either of them had done rendered or adjudged or hereafter to be had done rendered or adudged (saving expressly to the use of the State all fines and forfeiture adjudged or accruing to the State by virtue of the conviction or attainder as aforesaid of the said Michael Witman) also all and singular the outlawries by reason of the Premises or any or either of them proclaimed or hereafter to be proclaimed and all and all manner of suits complaints or impeachments censures and Process whatsoever which the said Commonwealth against him by reason of the Premises or of any or either of them should have had have or hereafter may in any wise have and the Suit of the Peace of the said Commonwealth which against the aforesaid Michael Witman pertains or may pertain by reason of the Premises or of any or either of them from peace to him thereupon given and grant not willing that the said Michael Witman by the Sheriffs Justices Bailiffs or other our ministers or successors for or by occasion of the Premises or of any or either of them be molested disturbed or in any thing aggrieved and willing that

these letters patent as to all and singular the Premises afore mentioned except as to the saving herein before excepted be and remain good form vailid and effectual in Law although the crimes and offenses aforesaid be not fully set forth and that this Pardon be in all Courts within this Commonwealth and elsewhere interpreted and adjudged in the most favorable sence for the more sure release pardon and exoneration of the said Michael Witman as to grant or declaration in that behalf obtained or to be obtained any defect or defects in these letters Patent contained or any Law act ordinance or provision proclamation or restriction or any other thing cause or matter whatsoever to the contrary hereof in any wise notwithstanding.

Given by order of the Council under the Hand of his Excellency Joseph Reed Esquire President and the Seal of the State at Philadelphia this Twenty-first day of January in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-nine.

Recorded the 22d day Decr. 1779

JOHN HUBLEY. R

Attest

T. MATLACK

Sec'y

It would seem from all the foregoing that after all of Witman's property that the State could lay its hands on had been taken from him and confiscated, he was subjected to the further punishment of imprisonment. Fortunately for him, the latter was not of long duration, and he became a free man again. He was only one of the hundreds of loyalists in the State, but perhaps he was more outspoken than most of them, and, besides, the owner of a considerable estate, both circumstances contributing

to make him conspicuous beyond most of his fellow traitors, and calling down upon him the newly-founded Commonwealth. Of his subsequent career, no record has so far been discovered.

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

Lancaster, Sept. 2, 1910.

The Lancaster County Historical Society resumed its sessions for the winter this evening, there being a very good attendance of the members when President Steinman called the meeting to order.

The minutes of the June meeting and also of the Bi-Centenary committee were read and approved.

Clarence M. Burton, of Detroit, and J. Aldus Herr, of Lampeter, were elected to membership. The following were proposed: Luther Willig, Dr. D. Sherman Smith, Mrs. D. Sherman Smith, Dr. F. A. Achey, A. B. Hess, Lancaster; Hon. G. H. Homsher, Strasburg; Hon. D. W. Graybill, Petersburg.

The following donations were acknowledged through Librarian Steigewalt:

Tioga County Historical Society Papers, Volume 2, Part 2; Schuylkill County Historical Society Publications, Volume 2, No. 5; Century Club of American Newspapers, with supplement thereto, from St. Louis Republic; Pennsylvania-German for June, July and August; Historic Notes of Visit of U. S. Scout Cruiser Chester to Chester, Pa., from City Clerk of that city; American Catholic Historical Researches for July, 1910; Oklahoma Magazine for August; German-American Annals, March and April, 1910; American Philosophical

Society Proceedings for July, 1910; The Life and Times of Senator James Ross, presented by Geo. R. Prowell, York; Pen Pictures of Early Pioneer Life in Upper Canada, presented by Michael Gonder Sherk; Transactions of Berks County Historical Society, 1905-10; Pennsylvania-German, June, July and August; Bulletins of the Grand Rapids Public Library; Bulletin of the New York State Museum; Bulletin of the New York Public Library; Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society; a number of publications through Hon. W. U. Hensel; a number of exchanges from the MacMillan Company, Public Library of Grand Rapids; Education List from Library of Congress; Pamphlet from Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh.

Special donations acknowledged were:

Miss Martha Clark presented a map of the United States of the date of 1817.

Jere. M. Bauman, of the Philadelphia Inquirer, formerly a resident of Manheim, presented a rare book, being a bound volume of "The American Museum of Universal Magazine," a monthly publication of 1791, of special local interest because it contains two letters from General Edward Hand, of Lancaster, to the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, on the advantage of preparing seed oats with plaster of Paris.

Rev. D. R. Workman, of Paradise, presented to the society a precious little volume, being a tribute to the memory of Mrs. Catharine M. Jenkins, of Windsor Place, near Churchtown, by the Rev. John Leaman, M. D., pastor of the Church of Cedar Grove, published in 1857. The sub-

ject of this memoir was the mother of the late Mrs. John W. Nevin, of this city, and ancestress of a large and distinguished family.

Rev. Workman also presented three grants of lands in the county of Lancaster from the Proprietaries, being signed by John Thomas and Richard Penn, and manuscripts of much value.

Another interesting contribution was "Pen Pictures of Early Pioneer Life in Upper Canada," presented by Michael Gonder Sherk. This is a valuable contribution to the life and history of the German-American settlers in Canada, many of whom went from Pennsylvania. It is profusely illustrated.

The "German-American Annals," which is a continuation of the quarterly "Americana Germanica," has an appreciation of the late Rev. Dr. Jos. H. Dubbs in its current number, from its Berlin, New York, Leipzig, London and Paris offices of publication.

The thanks of the society were extended to all of the donors.

Mrs. Mary N. Robinson read from an old document found in the Court House which threw some light on a Lancaster county loyalist, Michael Witman. The document was the petition of Witman for his release from prison. Witman was a Tory, who owned a tavern in Cocalico township. His property was seized by the Provincial Government, sold, and Witman placed in jail.

Following Mrs. Robinson's article, H. Frank Eshleman read another portion of his paper on Judge John Wright.

A motion was presented by A. F. Hostetter, Esq., and adopted, providing for the presentation to the Smith Library of the society's publications to complete their sets.

THE BI-CENTENARY COMMITTEE.

Following the meeting of the Historical Society the committee arranging for the Bi-centennial held a meeting to complete arrangements.

J. Aldus Herr and H. Frank Eshleman, the committee on boulder, reported that the boulder, weighing nine tons, was delivered to the grounds at half-past three on Friday afternoon by John H. Myers, the work being in charge of his foreman, Andrew George. It was dragged on rollers out of the quarry about two hundred yards and loaded on a trolley truck and safely landed. Immediately Mr. Haldy set to work to cut a face on it, on which to fasten the commemorative tablet, which has been here a week. It is supposed it will require two full days to finish this work and set up the boulder.

Mr. Hensel reported that over 2,500 invitations were sent out, and many responses have been received. The indications are that if the day is fine the audience will be tremendous. All persons are freely invited to be present, and the invitations were used principally to reach distant persons and to stimulate interest. There is no admission charge or any collection or other requirement of any kind or from any who attend. He also reported that the souvenir programme is about finished, and it will be handsome and of great historic value, the cover being especially designed in the Pennsylvania-German colors, yellow and black. It is proposed to sell it for ten cents.

Mr. Hensel also reported that automobiles will be present to accommodate sightseers, etc.

Mr. Herr reported that horses' feed and food for those who wish to buy lunch are provided for, and that there will be seats for about 1,000 people

on the ground and the church may be used by those who wish to sit and rest indoors. A speakers' stand is also being looked after. Trolleys will run every half hour. The spot can be reached in less than two hours by trolley from the farthest corner of the county. From Lancaster the place of meeting is only twenty minutes distant.

Mr. L. B. Herr reported that the music will be ready in a day or two. The music will consist of sacred hymns that all know, such as "How Firm a Foundation" and others, and several thousand slips will be printed with the words to distribute. There will be no instrumental music, but all are expected to join in the vocal.

There was great interest shown at the meeting, about three-fourths of the general committee being present, and of the local committee, besides the chairman, J. Aldus Herr, there were present C. R. Herr, Hon. John G. Homsher, A. B. Hess, A. K. Hostetter, William Miller, C. A. Burrowes, Hon. D. W. Graybill and others.

